

## Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-11

OMB-01 ACDA-05 /074 W

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R 090900Z FEB 76 ZFF5 RUHQHQA

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9650

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 0691

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG

SUBJECT: INDO-BANGALEE RELATIONS: NEW FOCUS ON WATER PROBLEMS

1. COMMODORE KHAN, DEPUTY CHIEF MARTIAL LAW ADMINIS-  
TRATOR, TOLD ME AT DINNER SATURDAY NIGHT THAT BANGLADESH'S  
NEW WATER PROBLEMS WITH INDIA OVER THE FARAKKA BARRAGE  
MAY BECOME AS SERIOUS, OR EVEN MORE SERIOUS, THAN THE  
BORDER HARASSMENT. HE SAID THAT INDIA HAD BEGUN AT  
THE END OF THE YEAR TO TAKE 40,000 CUSECS, THAT THIS  
FIGURE HAD BEEN CONFIRMED BY AN INDIAN SPEAKER IN THE  
LOK SABHA, AND THAT THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS ALREADY  
WAS THAT THE GANGES IN BANGLADESH WAS SIX FEET LOWER  
THAN THE NORMAL AVERAGE BASED ON THE RECORDS OF THE  
PAST THIRTY YEARS. HE SAID THE INDIAN ACTION THREATENED  
DAMAGE TO THE BORO CROP AS THE FIRST EFFECT WOULD BE TO  
HARM THE USERS OF SHALLOW TUBE WELLS. NAVIGATION WOULD  
ALSO BE IMPAIRED ON SOME STRETCHES OF RIVER AND EVENTUALLY  
THERE WOULD BE A SERIOUS SALINITY PROBLEM, HE SAID.  
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2. COMMODORE KHAN SAID IRONICALLY THAT SOME INDIANS WERE  
CONTENDING THAT THEY ACTUALLY NEEDED 60,000 CUSECS, SO  
THAT THEIR ACTION IN TAKING ONLY 40,000 WAS OSTENSIBLY  
GENEROUS. HESAIDTHAT THE INCREASED INDIAN TAKE WAS

NOT ENTIRELY JUSTIFIED BY THE NEED TO FLUSH THE ROUGHLY  
AND THAT THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES WERE ACTUALLY THE INDIAN  
FARMERS IN WEST BENGAL. HE ALLEGED THAT THE CONSTRUCTION  
OF THE FARAKKA BARRAGE AT ITS PARTICULAR SITE HAD MADE  
NO SENSE FROM THE BEGINNING EXCEPT IN TERMS OF CONTROLLING  
THE FLOW INTO THIS COUNTRY. HE SAID THEY HAD SENT TWO  
NOTES RECENTLY TO THE INDIANS ABOUT THIS URGENT MATTER  
BUT HAD RECEIVED NO REPLIES AS YET. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT  
LAST YEAR'S INTERIM AGREEMENT ON SHARING THE WATERS HAD  
NOT BEEN RENEWED AND THAT THERE MIGHT THUS BE SOME QUESTION  
ABOUT THE LEGAL BASIS FOR BANGLADESH'S CLAIM, BUT ABSOLUTELY  
NONE, HE SAID, ABOUT ITS MORAL RIGHT.

3. COINCIDENTALLY, POLITICAL COUNSELOR WAS TOLD TODAY BY  
CONFIDANT OF B.M. ABBAS, BANGLADESH'S CHIEF TECHNICAL  
PARTICIPANT IN THE SEVERAL FARAKKA BARRAGE NEGOTIATIONS,  
THAT MEETING OF PRESIDENT'S CONCIL OF ADVISORS EARLIER  
ON SATURDAY EVENING (AT WHICH ABBAS WAS PRESENT) HAD SEEN  
GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN TAKE A VERY HARD LINE AGAINST INDIA  
ON THIS ISSUE, AND THAT ZIA HAD BEEN JOINED BY MANY OTHERS  
IN STRESSING POINT THAT LOSS OF GANGA WATERS IS A LIFE-  
AND-DEATH ISSUE, GIVEN THE LOSS OF FOOD PRODUCTION WHICH  
CONTINUED LARGE-SCALE DIVERSION WILL CAUSE.

4. COMMENT: THE DACCA PRESS HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO MAKE AN  
ISSUE OF INDIA'S INCREASED DIVERSION OF WATER (DACCA 0606)  
BUT THIS IS THE STRONGEST EXPRESSION OF OFFICIAL CONCERN

THAT WE HAVE HEARD. IT ALSO REFLECTS THE RIGIDIFYING ANTI-  
INDIAN ATTITUDES CHARACTERISTIC OF THE OFFICIALS OF THE PRESENT  
GOVERNMENT, AND IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT COMMODORE KHAN'S  
REMARKS TO ME WERE MADE IN THE PRESENCE OF A DACCA PUB-  
LISHER (ITTEFAQ) AND A DACCA BUSINESSMAN, BOTH OF WHOM  
APPEARED TO SHARE THE COMMODORE'S CONCERN AND BIASES.  
THE WATER ISSUE MAY INDEED, AS COMMODORE KKAH ASSERTS,  
BECOME AS CRITICAL ISSUE AS THE BORDER HARASSMENT.  
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THERE MAY BE SOME CONFUSION HERE ABOUT WHAT IS ACTUALLY  
GOING ON AT THE BORDER, WITH THE FLURRY OF CLAIMS AND  
COUNTERCLAIMS, BUT AN ACTUAL DROP IN THE WATER LEVELS IN  
BANGLADESH WILL BE TANGIBLE AND WILL AFFECT IMMEASURABLY  
MORE PEOPLE, IF IT IS SERIOUS ENOUGH, THAN THE ALLEGED  
BORDER RAIDS.  
BOSTER

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